

Dear Sen. Dembrow, Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I'm a 37-year-old writer, editor, and new mom in Sen. Dembrow's district, and I'm writing in support of HB 3031, the FAMILI Equity Act. After working as an editor in NYC, I moved to Oregon and I've run my own business as a freelance writer/editor for eight years, working for local Oregon companies (Nike, Barre3, Argyle Winery, Dave's Killer Bread, etc) and also for national magazines (*Esquire*, *the New Yorker*, *Glamour*, etc). I'd like to share my personal story of why having paid parental leave in Oregon would've greatly improved my first postpartum months.

When my husband and I had a baby this year, we did it in the most planned, financially responsible way possible for us. We budgeted for me taking three months off before returning to my contract work at Nike, where I've been a contractor for three years, and which makes up the bulk of my income, but doesn't provide for paid parental leave or even holding my job through FMLA protections. For the nine months of my pregnancy, every month my husband and I put away money to cover what would be three months of my unpaid leave. While on leave, I checked in with my manager at Nike, and he and I chose my return-to-work date. I hired a nanny to provide childcare and signed a contract for that date. Then...two weeks before I was supposed to go back to Nike, my project of three years was cut, and just like that, we had a commitment to a new major (\$1,500/month) childcare expense, and no income coming in. I panicked, stressed, cried, and hustled to scrape together work to cover the new massive expense. But the experience showed me that no matter how much a family can plan, having a child and no paid parental leave places a huge financial and emotional burden on a family.

For us – two working parents with upper-middle-class incomes, homeowners, and responsible planners, having our first child – the burden was shockingly hard to manage. Not having any paid leave means that a parent's attention and priority must shift from taking care of a new baby (believe me, this in and of itself is an all-encompassing and plenty stressful endeavor) to making enough money to cover the existing expenses, plus all of the new ones a baby requires. Looking at our financial-tracking software, we're spending an extra \$2,500 a month on our baby. The expense of having a child, especially without any safety net of paid family leave in our state, means that despite what our hearts want, we probably will not have another child due to economic constraints. In this way, for us and many other families, the economic burden of not having paid parental leave impacts our freedom of choice to grow our family the way we want.

There is of course a major economic advantage to parents who would be covered by HB 3031, the FAMILI Equity Act. But there is also a major emotional advantage to giving your constituents who are new parents (we're exhausted, but we're doing our best for our individual families and our Oregon communities) the freedom to devote our minds to taking care of our children, the next generation of Oregonians, instead of panicking over how we'll cover the expenses a new baby brings (along with a lot of joy).

Thank you for your attention, for your support of the FAMILI Equity Act/HB 3031, and for doing the right thing for all of Oregon's families.

Kindly,

Sarah Wexler & Anthony Larson

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